

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

SHOULD THE MARINE CORPS EXPAND ITS ROLE IN SPECIAL OPERATIONS?

by

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ABSTRACT

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The on going war on terrorism (WOT) has called for the increased reliance on special operations to cover the wide array of asymmetrical threats encountered. With special operations commitments increasing, the assets required to conduct these missions are rapidly diminishing. The National Security Strategy and Quadrennial Defense Review Report have both called for innovative and flexible approaches to encountering the capability based threats, and have indicated the need for reliance on special operations to carry out this fight. This, most likely, will not be accompanied with additional force structure or money. One possible solution to fill the shortage in special operations forces would be the inclusion of the Marine Corps in special operations. Then Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Jones and Commanding General of USSOCOM, General Holland, recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement in an attempt to strengthen the relationship between the Marine Corps and special operations. The challenge will be to determine what unique capability the Corps can provide special operations without adding redundancy and without degrading the Marine Corps' primary expeditionary role.

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SHOULD THE MARINE CORPS EXPAND ITS ROLE IN SPECIAL OPERATIONS?

We could easily end up with more than we need for contingencies that are no longer likely, and less than we must have to meet emerging challenges.

—President George Bush
2 August 1990

During any given week, an average of more than 3,500 Special Operations Forces (SOF) are deployed overseas in some sixty-nine countries. Their missions range from counterdrug assistance and demining to peacekeeping, disaster relief, military training assistance, and many other special mission activities.¹

Special operations are a misunderstood and often take for granted part of the United States military. Special Operations Forces (SOF) have usually been viewed as a necessary burden; required to support national security strategy and defense structure, but always accused a robber of precious resources. Whether their current stature had been that of heroes, villains or as cowboys on their 'own program'; special operations usually did not fair well in the 'knife fight' for resources within the circles of the conventional military circles. They were the easiest to put to the wayside when cuts were made. "Services have a tendency in force planning to focus on high-intensity conflicts upon which resource programs are principally justified."²

Following their critical role in Viet Nam, special operations did not had a lot of fanfare until recently with their heavy involvement and lead role in Operation Enduring Freedom. U.S. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has taken the lead in the government's current backing of special operations and their future role in the War on Terrorism (WOT). "Today we're taking a number of steps to strengthen the U.S. Special Operations Command so it can make even greater contributions to the global war on terror."³ This has been reinforced by the decision to make the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) a supported Commandant Commander, expanding their role from that of normally a supporting commander.

Due to their unique nature, with an unanticipated increase in demand for special operations capabilities, there is a corresponding shortage in assets to meet the demand. Today, there are more SOF missions than SOF units can execute. "Special Operations units are one of the key US forces 'in limited supply,' says Defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld. 'We need to see that we have the right numbers in the right places,' given the extensive role of the elite units in counterterrorism operations around the globe."⁴ Unlike conventional forces though,

there is a significant lead/lag time between realizing a shortage in special operations forces and when that gap can be filled. SOF cannot be grown overnight due to the extensive, specialized training required of its forces. This lag time (years) from realizing a need for more SOF, to being able to train more SOF, has forced leaders to look for other sources and alternative methods to fill the shortage in SOF capabilities. Questions that have been raised in developing options for filling the special operations void are: Can conventional forces accomplish some of the normal missions assigned SOF? Will the fix be a gap filler or a permanent part of SOF until the current demand diminishes? Should there be rethinking on what missions should be assigned SOF?

This paper will use the following approach to those questions in developing a solution. Conventional forces should not be used for missions normally assigned to SOF. These missions were given to SOF because of the requirement for a unique specialized force to execute them successfully. Assigning special operations type missions to conventional forces will degrade a conventional force's training for their normal mission requirements. Training for additional missions equates to additional money and equipment required. This money would most likely come from their normal training funds. This could quite possibly lead to a situation where the unit is ill prepared to do either mission leading to potential mission failure. We should not forget the reasons why SOF was formed.

The determined 'fix' to SOF shortages should be one that is relatively long term and not just a gap filler due to the long term effects on force structure and budgeting these decisions might have. SOF assets and capabilities must also be consistent and not cyclic in structure to be effective. Additionally the need for more SOF will not diminish for at least the next decade.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss what possible fix is currently available to alleviate SOF shortages; keeping in mind the fix needs to occur soon, if not immediately. The current threat our country faces today has not diminished. Time is on the threat's side, the longer we wait to prosecute the required SOF oriented missions, the less likelihood of defeating the current threat.

One initiative taken in attempting to fill the SOF void, has been examining what, if any, SOF role the Marine Corps can play. Issues that need to be addressed with this initiative are: Would the Marine Corps' role be one using Marine units as they are now, or Marine units refocused/trained towards SOF type missions? What contributions can be made by a service that chose not to participate in contributions to SOCOM in 1987? Can the unique expeditionary 'total package' capability of the Marine Corps offer something unique in capabilities and fill the current SOF void?

Comments and guidance given over the past year and a half by then Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), General Jones and Commanding General of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)-General Holland have begun a movement towards increasing the Marine Corps' role in special operations. A contributing catalyst to this movement was the extensive interaction between Marine Corps forces and special operations units during Operation Enduring Freedom. The positive feedback from the interaction during this operation has created a potential opportunity for both organizations to gain from the interoperability on a long-term basis. In the effort to increase the numbers of SOF forces USSOCOM can draw from, "Marine forces will soon be drawn into the Special Operations Command for the first time."⁵

This paper intends to explore the potential future of the role of the United States Marine Corps in special operations. To better understand how special operations got to where it is today and why Marine Corps forces were not assigned under USSOCOM in 1987, this paper will briefly discuss the historical background that led to the decision to stand up USSOCOM. The paper will then address the current plan for Marine Corps involvement in special operations. A brief look at the historical interaction between the Marine Corps and special operations will be covered to show possible trend areas of supportability to special operations. The paper will then discuss four courses of action for the next step in the Marine Corps' future role in USSOCOM. To support Marine Corps' involvement in SOF, other considerations are discussed to determine intended and unintended consequences.

Some of the concepts used in this paper are not new, but were discouraged at the time of their introduction. "In the case of the Marines, the institution protected those who were focused on the mission of the past while slowly focusing greater effort on the...operations that make up future warfare."⁶ With today's plan for transformation, the time may be right to reintroduce them considering the non-linear, asymmetric threat we are facing today.

"Every new State Department employee is given two rubber stamps. One is to be used when the department opposes a proposal. It says "Now is not the time...." The other is to be used when the department is advocating a change in policy, and it says "At this critical juncture in history...."⁷ This statement could be applied to military thinking and transformation as well. The key point for the Marine Corps and USSOCOM is to decide which of those phrases applies today.

USSOCOM has expressed an immediate need for more SOF capable assets and forces that are expeditionary in nature, can deploy very quickly or are already deployed, and preferably

a total package that is self sustaining requiring a small foot print. The Marine Corps provides this capability today. Army conventional forces do not.

THE BEGINNING OF PRESENT DAY U. S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Historically SOF has experienced a series of ups and downs in relation to their capabilities, funding, and relationship with conventional forces. They were usually a neglected force until their capabilities were needed, and became an easy target for blame if things did not go well. Interestingly enough, the blame could usually be traced back to the funding decisions made by others, which negatively impacted special operations' training and readiness.

U.S. Special Operations Forces crested during the 1960's when they played a prominent role in Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia. They wallowed in a trough after U.S. armed forces withdrew from Southeast Asia. Nine active Army Special Forces group equivalents shrank to three and one was scheduled for deactivation. SOF aircraft suffered similar cuts or reverted to reserves, and the Navy decommissioned its only special operations submarine. SOF manning levels in every service dropped well below authorized strengths. Funding declined precipitously, to about one-tenth of 1 percent of the U. S. defense budget by 1975. SOF planning and programming expertise eroded rapidly.⁸

After the failed rescue attempt of the American hostages held in Tehran during Desert One, the United States awoke to the stark reality that something had to be done to improve our country's special operations capability. Desert One was a product of the neglect of Special Operations Forces during the 1970s. SOF's capabilities had declined significantly throughout the post-Vietnam era. During this time frame, there was considerable animosity between SOF and the conventional military. Since the conventional military ruled the roost, this led to significant budget cuts for the SOF community. In May of 1980, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJSCS) chartered a Special Operations Review Group to commence an investigation of Operation Eagle Claw (Code Name for Desert One Rescue Mission). Following the failure of Desert One, an investigative commission was formed, called the Holloway Commission. This commission's purpose was to assess why the mission failed and the lessons learned, and actions required at a joint level to prevent future occurrences of this type. The findings of the board highlighted several deficiencies in the mission. The Desert One mission commander, Colonel Beckwith (Army SF) provided testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee as to why he thought the mission failed and what actions could be taken to prevent future occurrences of this type. He attributed the failure to "Murphy's Law and the use of an ad hoc organization for such a difficult mission. 'We went out and found bits and pieces, people and equipment, brought them together occasionally, and then asked them to perform a highly

complex mission,' he said... 'The parts all performed, but they didn't necessarily perform as a team.'"⁹

Colonel Beckwith's testimony and the findings of the commission, had a lot to do with the decision to stand up USSOCOM in 1987 following the passage of the Goldwaters-Nichols Act. Senators Sam Nunn and William Cohen proposed an amendment to the act to provide the same kind of sweeping changes to U.S. Special Operations that was occurring throughout the rest of the services. The amendment directed the following:

1. Established USSOCOM, which was to be commanded by a four-star general. All active and reserve special operations forces would fall under control of USSOCOM.
2. It established an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflicts—ASD (SOLIC)—whose job was to supervise those areas.
3. It defined mission requirements of special operations. These missions now included: direct action, strategic reconnaissance, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, counterterrorism, civil affairs, psychological operations, humanitarian assistance, and other activities specified.
4. It gave USSOCOM its own funding and control over its own resources. A new funding category was created—Major Force Program 11 (MFP-11). This required the Department of Defense (DOD) to keep special operations forces funding separate from general service funding.
5. The amendment specified in unusual detail the responsibilities of the new CINC and the Assistant Secretary of defense, the control of resources in money and manpower, and the monitoring of SOF officer and enlisted promotions.¹⁰

Now that the infrastructure and ground rules had been established for the new command, decisions had to be made as to what forces would make up this new command and who would provide them. The Army had provided their Special Forces Groups, Special Operations Aviation Regiments (SOAR), and the 75th Ranger Regiments. The Air Force offered their special operations aviation assets and the Navy, after a futile attempt to retain control, surrendered control of their SEALs to SOCOM.¹¹ The only service that did not provide any units to SOCOM in 1987 was the Marine Corps, even though they had been involved in special operations for quite some time.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND THE MARINE CORPS

The field is divided within the Corps as to whether Marines belong in SOF. The big debate began in 1985 when the first MAU (SOC) was designated. Historically though, the Marine Corps' involvement in SOF is nothing new. In the early years, special operations were an integral part of Marine Corps operations, but they weren't really categorized as 'special operations'.

SMALL WARS-

Some could argue that the early years of the Marine Corps involved many special operations type missions. "...the first amphibious operation on New Providence Island in the Bahamas; ... was clearly a classic special operation....Capt Presley O'Bannon's escapade in Tripoli was a special operation. And from the Barbary Coast to the Banana Wars, special operation missions dominated our deployments. In those campaigns and others, we conducted psychological and guerilla campaigns and other nonconventional types of engagements."¹²

The Marine Corps was one of the first to address this type of doctrine and tactics with the publication of their Small Wars Manual, which is still widely referenced today in the development of the Marine Corps' Small Wars Center of Excellence.

"The Marine Corps' role in Small Wars has a long and complex history. During the early years of the twentieth century, the Corps was widely viewed as the nation's overseas police and initial response force.... As a result of this "natural fit" and the experience of a series of guerilla wars and military interventions loosely known as the "Banana Wars..."¹³, the Marine Corps soon discovered they had developed a niche in conducting these special operations type missions. The Marine Corps latched on to this doctrine during the inter war period perfecting their counterinsurgency operations in the Caribbean.

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

Marine Corps personnel continued involvement in special operations during World War II. During this period the Marine Corps found itself involved in what would be termed today as 'black operations'. "Assigned to the secretive world of spies and saboteurs were 51 Marines who served with the U.S. Office of Strategic Services to engage in behind-the-lines operations in North Africa and Europe from 1941 to 1945."¹⁴

FORCE RECON-

When World War II came about, the Marine Corps developed a raider unit similar to that of the British Royal Marine Commandos. The Raiders took part in many landings, providing a

light force that could strike hard and fast in different locations. A second unit was formed and called an "Observation Group" of the 1st Marine Division. The group expanded to 98 Marines in 1943 and was renamed the Amphibious Recon Company. This was the beginning of present day Marine Recon.¹⁵

During the Korean War, Marine Recon existed as a means to provide intelligence on North Korean forces and to conduct small raids against railroad lines and tunnels. During this time Marine Recon worked closely with US Navy Underwater Demolition Teams.¹⁶

In Viet Nam, the Marine Corps used reconnaissance units to make up for the deficiency in its ability to gather actionable intelligence. The Recon Teams would operate deep behind enemy lines in seven man teams performing operations that were dubbed "Stingray Operations". Once on the ground they would set up ambushes or prisoner snatches to recover enemy documents or personnel for interrogation. The forces overcame their small size by incorporating modern day concepts of fire support and air support to carry out their missions.¹⁷

"During the 1970s and 1980s Recon went through some changes...When the hostage recovery program was started in 1976 with federal law enforcement agencies and the Army Special Forces, some of the Recon units were assigned to direct action missions. In 1977, snipers were again a part of the marine units."¹⁸

Marine Recon also participated later on in Grenada, Panama, the Gulf War, and most recently in Operation Enduring Freedom.

COMBINED ACTION PLATOONS (CAP) IN VIET NAM-

One of the recommendations of the Small Wars manual was the combination of Marine personnel with local personnel in operational formations. Almost as soon as they arrived in Vietnam, the Marines began organizing what became known as Combined Action Platoons (CAP). A combined action platoon integrated a Marine squad into a Vietnamese local defense platoon. Typically, a CAP included fourteen marines (a squad leader, grenadier/assistant squad leader, the three fire teams of four each), plus three Navy Corpsmen, with a Vietnamese local defense platoon of thirty-eight men (a platoon leader, four staff personnel, and three squads of each).¹⁹

The CAP program's mission was to secure many of the local villages accomplished through these Marine units living amongst the populace. The effectiveness of the program began initiatives to expand the program but senior leaders felt it was a waste of good infantry manpower. In hindsight though, it had proven to be a very effective use of manpower in that type of conflict. The CAP program was able to accomplish what it did with only "...about 2,000

Marines, about two battalions' worth of manpower at a time when the United States had well over a hundred combat battalions in country."²⁰

THE FUTURE OF THINGS TO COME (70'S, 80'S AND 90'S)-

The post Vietnam era and early 1980's saw a period of where response to regional instability became the focus of military forces. The first of these type incidents was the 1975 Mayaguez incident. This operation required a rapid action response force to conduct a rescue operation of 40 American personnel who had been seized by the Khmer Rouge off the Cambodian coast. The forces conducting the rescue operation consisted of a Marine force to conduct the boarding of the U.S. merchant ship Mayaguez. An additional force consisted of a Marine Corps assault force using HH-53s, from the Air Force's 21st SOS, to conduct a heliborne hostage rescue attempt on Ko Tang Island. A classic example of what our special operations forces are required to do today.

Desert One occurred next. Blame can be cast where it may, but the bottom line was, the failure of this mission woke senior leaders to the fact, portions of our military forces must be better trained.

Urgent Fury in Grenada was a test bed for just about every rapid action response force the United States could muster. The Marine Corps participated in the operation with its Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU). This was the first of many rapid action response missions that would call upon the utility of the expeditionary nature of the Marine/Navy forces afloat. Interestingly enough, immediately after the execution of the Grenada mission, these same Marine forces continued sailing to Lebanon for peace keeping operations.

In 1989, during Operation Preying Mantis, Marine forces supported special operations to conduct destruction raids of oil platforms that were being used for aggressive attacks in the Persian Gulf.

In late summer of 1990, the 22nd MEU conducted an evacuation of the embassy in Liberia due to the unrest in that country.

During Operation Eastern Exit, Marine expeditionary forces assigned to 4th MEB for Desert Shield, were used to execute a no notice evacuation of the embassy in Somalia flying CH-53Es 466 miles using air refueling to execute the mission.

In 1994, the Marine Corps redeployed its MEU (SOC), which had just returned from its deployment off the coast of Bosnia, to support Uphold Democracy in Haiti. The Marine Corps eventually replaced it with a Special Purpose MAGTF (MEU size) to conduct operations similar in nature to those being conducting by the JSOTF.

During the Bosnian conflict, JSOTFs and the MEU (SOCs) routinely swapped standing watch for combat search and rescue (CSAR). It was during the Marines' watch that the call came to conduct the rescue of Captain O'Grady using CH-53Es, AH-1Ws, AV-8Bs, and a Marine ground rescue force.

From 1990 through 1997, a standing JTF was formed consisting of a dedicated Marine Corps Battalion, Force Reconnaissance element, and a CH-53E squadron. This JTF trained to SOCOM standards as directed by the Special Operation Training Group (SOTG) at Camp Lejeune. This JTF would have been utilized if other SOCOM assets were unable to respond to a crisis situation. This unit was eventually stood down when areas of responsibility shifted.

The Marine Corps Reserve 4th Civil Affairs Group have had a standing relationship with the United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC) since 1996. In 1997, a Marine Corps CAG detachment was put under the control of USACAPOC for operations in Bosnia.²¹

Historically, the Marine Corps has been involved in types of missions that would be normally categorized as special operations, conducting them unilaterally or in a supporting role.

So, were these historical cases of an organization that possesses inherent special operations capabilities, or were they missions a general purpose force, such as the Marine Corps, could execute? This is one of the reasons why the debate has been so strong as to whether the Marine Corps should participate in special operations or not. Can the Marine Corps effectively execute special operations type missions and still not belong to SOCOM?

WHY THE MARINE CORPS DIDN'T JOIN USSOCOM

Following the recent success and infatuation with special operations, due to its role in Operation Enduring Freedom, it is hard for some to imagine that special operations' future, as we know it today, was shaky not long ago.

Prior to USSOCOM being established, other ideas on how to fix SOF were floated around. An idea that surfaced promising to fix SOF, was the thought of implementing a "sixth service". In August 1995, Representative Dan Daniel, then Chairman of the House of Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee which had oversight of U.S. Special Operations, had proposed a sixth service be created specifically for special operations. He believed the individual services held "SOF to be peripheral to the interests, missions, goals and traditions that they view as essential."²² He felt a sixth service would give special operations more relevance.

In 1987, Congress made its decision and passed the legislation directing the standing up of USSOCOM, falling in on the tail of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. This legislation, referred to as the Cohen-Nunn Act, also called for the standing up of a new position to head up special operations. This position was the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC). What Congress had not anticipated, though, was the difficulty of finding someone to fulfill the position. The Department of Defense was reluctant to volunteer anyone to take the position. This fact, coupled with the difficulty of implementing a newly formed command (USSOCOM) raised some significant challenges for the military. It was easy for Congress to say make it happen through legislation, but the burden of making it work fell on the military.

Implementing the Cohen-Nunn Act had several areas of contention. Along with having to find someone credible to fill the ASD/SOLIC position, the services now had to figure out which forces would be assigned to SOCOM. The services had now discovered a new found love for their SOF assets and were not excited about giving up their own special operations forces. The service being the most vocal in their discontent was the Navy. The conventional Navy fought hard to maintain control of their SEALs, but eventually lost the battle.²³

The Marine Corps, however, had a very volatile position in the ability to support SOCOM requirements, one that had impact on its potential existence as a service. To support its decision, the Marine Corps dug out its history books and reviewed some of the lessons learned resulting from World War II, and the roles and missions of the British Commandos (Marines) and the Marine Corps Raiders. During World War II, President Roosevelt, after meeting with Winston Churchill, pushed for the creation of units similar to the British Commandos who could do SOF type Special Reconnaissance/Direct Action (SR/DA) missions behind enemy lines. This led to the creation of the Raiders and parachute regiments during the war. At the same time though, the Commandant of the Marine Corps tried to avoid having the Marine Corps mission reduced to that of the British Commandos and advocated the amphibious capability; concentrating the Marine Corps efforts towards perfecting amphibious operations in the Pacific. Later amphibious became Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF), but the internal organizational fear of being reduced to a 'Raider Force', at the expense of a larger capability has been a concern of the Marine Corps ever since.²⁴

Providing further guidance in what forces were to be surrendered to SOCOM, a memorandum was put out by the Assistant Secretary of Defense at the time, Mr. Taft, directing there was to be "no duplication of capabilities amongst the services."²⁵

The view of the Marine Corps at the time, and given the infancy of the newly formed USSOCOM, the Marine Corps felt there was little they could offer USSOCOM within the guidance for 'no duplication of effort'. The Army was going to provide the land forces, the Air Force was providing the fixed wing and rotary wing air, and the Navy was providing the maritime forces. The leadership's view was the Marine Corps did all those things in one form or another, but not in as dedicated or focused manner.²⁶

It was no surprise then, that in 1987 when USSOCOM was being formed (historical context of the Cold War during that time), General P.X. Kelley, then Commandant of the Marine Corps, "did not believe that committing Marine forces to a fledgling and separate command allowed the corps to retain the level of flexibility it needed to meet the broad spectrum of missions Marine forces were assigned around the world."²⁷

However, General Kelly did feel that the Corps could provide a special operations capability to the nation, without surrendering control of its forces. He tasked General Alfred M. Gray, then Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, to develop a plan to increase the special operations capable (SOC) nature of the Marine forces to meet the nation's special operations needs, while still preserving the sanctity and flexibility of the MAGTF. General Gray took the MAGTF concept and developed a training and evaluation plan to designate the Marine Amphibious Units into Special Operations Capable (SOC).²⁸

"The Marine Corps, for its part, sought to determine what special operations capabilities already existed and which ones needed to be developed in order to enhance its versatility, without duplicating capabilities of existing special operations forces."²⁹ The MAU (SOC) concept emerged using a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) ideology providing an expeditionary total package capability. The Marine Corp's concept of MAGTF is a rapid deployable unit that consists of four essential elements: Command Element, Ground Combat Element, Air Combat Element, and Service Support Element. The synergy of these four elements provided a unique self-sustaining total package capability for a force commander; therefore providing something unique and no duplication of effort. The logical force to provide this capability to the special operations world was the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), which at that time was referred to as the MAU. The MAU was changed to MEU in 1987 to emphasize the expeditionary nature of the unit. To give it a special operations capability, "...the Marine Corps established 18 special operations missions, beyond the traditional conventional ones..."³⁰

As much of a forward deployed capability this force provided the special operations community, its utility was met with mixed reviews by SOF either due to the parochialism associated with the Marine Corps not joining SOCOM, or a lack of understanding of the MEU's

capabilities. “The end result of the MEU contribution to SOF was a generation of interest amongst the special operations community only to a level of using the amphibious platforms as a launch point or to a lesser degree, the use of the MEU to sanitize an area in an ‘in-extremis’ situation.”³¹ The joint definition of ‘in-extremis’ being “a situation of such exceptional urgency that immediate action must be taken to minimize imminent loss of life or catastrophic degradation of the political or military situation.”³²

Most people in the Marine Corps were pleased with the decision not to join SOCOM due to their fear of losing forces and funding, coupled with their animosity towards SOF. The special operations community was content with the Marine Corps decision to not join the band wagon for a couple of reasons. For one, it was one less service to compete for funds in the special operations funding fight. Secondly, there was still a lot of harbored anger towards the Corps for Desert One. Many of those inside the SOF circles still placed blame on the Marines for the mission failure of the Desert One rescue attempt.

The controversy stemming from the 1980 Desert One rescue mission places blame on the Marines for having to abort the mission due to not having enough helicopters arrive at the forward refueling site. The lack of sufficient helicopters arriving at the site, and being mission ready for the final portion of the mission was attributed to a couple reasons. The Navy RH-53Ds flown by Marine Corps aircrews and one Air Force pilot, encountered mechanical problems during the mission causing some aircraft to abort. The mechanical problems encountered were complicated with the Marine Corps aircrews’ unfamiliarity with the Navy aircraft peculiar systems; a significant factor when analyzing an aircraft emergency and determining abort criteria. However, when missions fail, blame must be directed somewhere and the Marine Corps aircrews were the easiest target. “It is all too easy to blame an abort situation on mechanical failure, since with human factors involved, most commanders hesitate to challenge a pilot’s decision. But in this case I think we have to ask the question “Did the machine fail the man or did the man fail the machine?”³³

Since Desert One, there are still people in the SOF community who refuse to put that event behind them and continue to blame the Marine Corps for the abort of that mission. Blame is easy to redirect to someone else. Had another force been used to fly the helicopters, would they have been any more successful? Had the required number of helicopters made it to the final destination, would the ground teams have been successful in rescuing the hostages? It is easy to say yes when a second attempt was never made, and the hostages were subsequently released through diplomatic means.

A fact that was downplayed, was the Marine pilots flew over 600 miles at night, in the middle of a dust storm to a remote location in the Iranian desert at night. Lacking today's more sophisticated aircraft equipment, that fact is pretty significant. "Their successful arrival at Desert One proved they were prepared to do what it took for mission success. In addition, the helicopter crews were still committed to executing the mission if Colonel Beckwith had adjusted his forces to five helicopter loads."³⁴

The mission was not in vain however, since it had instigated the need for SOF reform and service interaction as a result of the Holloway Commission report. It is because of Desert One that SOF is the capable force it is today.

Since Desert One, resistance from both the Marine Corps and SOF traditionalists, have resisted any attempt to bridge the gap between the Marine Corps and SOF. SOF looks with a suspicious eye as to why the Marine Corps would join SOF now after all these years? Marine Corps traditionalists view SOF as a mission area that distracts from the Marine Corps' traditional missions. General Jones commented on SOF's resistance to work with the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps' traditionalists who are reluctant to expand our role in the defense of this nation. "There are people who think we're too hard to work with and we're just after their funding...' 'The Marine naysayers, on the other hand, say we're a general purpose force, and if we do this, we're going to diminish our end strength and we'll be a shadow of our former selves in five years.'"³⁵

The debate has become even more intense today concerning the actions the Marine Corps has already taken towards supporting special operations. Those opposed to this interaction share the same mind set as of those who were partially responsible for the apathy and neglect the Force Reconnaissance units suffered in the past. Very similar and reminiscent of what the other SOF organizations went through prior to the stand up of USSOCOM.

The next section will now examine what steps the Marine Corps can take to assist SOCOM efforts in the long term and the changes the Marine Corps may have to make to support that effort.

THE INCREASED NEED FOR SMALLER SPECIALIZED FORCES INSPIRED BY THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

If the Marine Corps and USSOCOM were content with the distant relationship established following 1987, what has changed to rethink this issue today?

It is important to remember much of the mindset and decisions made during the late 1970's and the 1980's were a result of post Viet Nam and the on going Cold War. The end of the Cold War ushered in a world of regional unpredictability. The face of conflict (at least for the

future we are capable in planning for) has changed from global hegemonic powers threatening to duke it out with large conventional forces, to one of a non-linear battlefield subjected with regional conflict, requiring heavier reliance on special mission type units to conduct a wide array of missions. "Drives for regional hegemony, resurgent nationalism, ethnic and religious rivalries, rising debt, drug trafficking, and terrorism will challenge the international order as it has seldom been challenged before."³⁶ This type of non-linear, asymmetrical and most times unpredictable form of conflict will be our major challenge in the future, requiring no notice deployments of units specialized in this type of conflict.

In light of this changing environment, the Marine Corps has found its niche in the Department of the Defense, as an organization crossing back and forth over the boundaries of being a general purpose force³⁷ and a specialized force. The Marine Corps' niche is a smaller, more maneuverable expeditionary force that is able to respond quickly and execute the mission or by shaping the battlefield for the hand over to larger, longer term land forces. The Marine Corps should focus on this niche and not try to duplicate the heavier conventional capabilities of the regular Army. This niche provides a Joint Force Commander a light, maneuverable force that can exploit a gap where the enemy is weak. Much like SOF does today.

In 1989, then Marine Corps Commandant, General Gray, saw the need to focus on making the Marine Corps the premier elite initial response force; leaving the heavier battle for the Army. "Battalions were being loaded down by tanks and artillery that would take up valuable ship space and slow the quick-response forces in a war emergency...others argued that the equipment would be useless in the smaller-scale, Third World conflicts that the Marine Corps is most likely to face today."³⁸

All of the services' transformation plans have acknowledged that our country's plan to encounter these threats must change from the earlier conventional thinking used for force planning and equipment during the Cold War. But even when faced with the acknowledged need to change, it is often difficult to transform an institution. "The Department of Defense (DOD) and the Armed Services are adapting albeit progress is disjointed and ever so slow...The perception now exists that the energy behind Marine innovation has dimmed, undermined by institutional pressures to defend current programs and restore 1980-era capabilities."³⁹ This is not to say we won't face a hegemonic threat in the distant future, but the Marine Corps must be realistic in planning for the most likely and most 'force consuming' threat. The past decade has demonstrated that conflicts such as Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Yemen, Afghanistan, East Timor, and the Philippines are the type of conflicts we will face daily. These types of conflicts have shown a trend in their development and our military's subsequent involvement. The conflict

initiates as a short notice, no prior planned campaign, requiring quick response forces for an initial national response. These forces are followed by heavier longer term forces who are eventually absorbed or are replaced by stabilization forces for an undetermined period of time. Intertwined with these longer term forces are the peacekeeping SOF and civil affairs. Because of the frequency of occurrence and duration to reach a desired end state, overlap of concurrent missions have become commonplace. Force employment has become more complex in nature requiring forces to be specialized due to the national and military impacts. In the future, these contingencies will also occur more frequently in the areas around the littorals requiring forces of a maritime expeditionary nature.

The War on Terrorism (WOT) following 9-11, coupled with previous operational commitments, has come close to breaking the bank on available forces for SOF missions. Rather than assuming the normal role of supporting, SOF has taken on a leading and sustained role as never seen before. This new mission responsibility has stretched their forces extremely thin, increasing operations tempo beyond manageable levels. When Operation Enduring Freedom began, SOF took the leading role during the beginning phases of the operation. A year and a half later, SOF are still heavily engaged in Afghanistan and surrounding areas in an attempt to stabilize the region, while routing out terrorists. With no relief in sight in Afghanistan, SOF is also engaged in the less publicized special operations taking place in the Philippines and Latin America. Added to the list of on going operations are their continuing efforts in the counter drug operations. The increased and overlapping commitments of SOCOM has highlighted the fact the command was not structured for executing a global type campaign of this magnitude. The command lacks the adequate support structure, logistics, communications, and mobility.⁴⁰ This has raised grave concern amongst top leaders in this country; not only because of the near time shortage of SOF personnel but also the long term shortages as the campaign against terrorism continues. Now as SOCOM takes on the additional role as a supported Combatant Command, their responsibilities will increase even more. Increased responsibilities equate to the need for increased SOF assets, preferably sooner than later.

“For the foreseeable future, there’s a requirement for more special operations-like forces,’ Jones said. ‘My argument is, if you already have a fair amount of those [in the Marines], don’t reinvent the wheel, use what you already have.’...’arguing that for the service to survive, it must make itself useful to regional commanders in combating terrorists and other operations.”⁴¹

Recent operations between special operations units and deployed Marine Corps forces indicated the commonality and compatibility between Marine units (in this case MEU (SOC)s) and special operations units. This coupled with the ongoing shortage of special operations

forces have driven military leaders to explore options to fill the current shortage and future shortage of special operations with forces that already exist.

But, implementing a conceptual vision is the hard part. Change is hard for the military, it is easy to discuss but hard to actually implement because of the bureaucracy involved.

The only thing harder than getting an new idea into the military mind is to get the old one out.

—B. H. LIDDELL HART

CLOSING THE GAP--MARINE CORPS SUPPORT OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Beginning in the late 1980's and during the 1990's the Marine Corps found itself in an ever increasing role as a immediate employable gap filler conducting missions that border lined between special operations and a general purpose force. Although the Marine Corps was able to flex to both roles, it wasn't until the events following 9-11 that the Marine Corps found itself thrust into an environment where it was a major role player in special operations.

HORN OF AFRICA--When planning began for SOF operations in the Horn of Africa region in the spring of 2002, the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) became a crucial element in the proposed operations there. Planning conferences between Joint Forces Special Operations Coalition Command's (JFSOCC) Crisis Response Element (CRE) and the MEU highlighted several areas that the MEU would be able to support special operations. The support being discussed was in functional areas that SOF cannot normally draw upon from within one organization (C4I, air, ground, and logistics). Critical areas the MEU would be able to assist the CRE were in providing an extensive headquarters staff to assist in planning and command and control, intelligence support, communications, rotary wing lift support, rotary wing close air support, fixed wing close air support, quick reaction force (QRF), and a floating maneuverable base to operate from, independent from requirements of host nation basing requirements.⁴²

Seven months later, Marine Corps forces have now headed up the JTF-Horn of Africa to carry out operations against known terrorist activities in that area. The JTF utilized its floating expeditionary maneuver to respond to any crisis in that area, without extensive host nation support basing requirements or major concerns in regards to force protection. A JSOTF was also put under the JTF's command to carry out special operations associated with their operation.

USSOCOM AND USMC November 09, 2001 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT-To establish the formal commitment between the two organizations, General Jones and General Holland signed a precedent setting Memorandum of Agreement establishing the basis for future interoperability. The purpose of the MOA is to reconstitute the USSOCOM/USMC board. The board will provide a forum for SOF and USMC to interface and coordinate with regard to common mission areas and similar procurement initiatives.⁴³

This board used to be held annually between USSOCOM and the Marine Corps but it had not met for 2 years prior to this MOA being signed, indicative of the two organizations keeping their distance and drifting apart in coordination and cooperation. With the reinstatement of the USMC and SOCOM board, this will provide an excellent forum for future interoperability.

MARINE CORPS/USSOCOM PLANNING CONFERENCES--Shortly following the signing of the November 09, 2001, MOA, a planning conference was held between the Marine Corps and USSOCOM. This conference, held in January 2002, was to establish ground rules and the direction to go between the Marine Corps and USSOCOM, setting the base for future interoperability between the two organizations. The efforts of this conference, and subsequent ones in August and November 2002, were to establish areas of supportability that the Marine Corps could assist USSOCOM in taking the pressure off of overextended SOF units. Specifically, they were to examine current capabilities and missions in order to leverage the unique capabilities of each organization, thus enhancing interoperability; establish and continue the interface between CONUS-based and theater based special operations forces and deploying Marine Air-Ground Task Forces. Conferences were also designed to synchronize USSOCOM and USMC warfighting developments, as well as materiel, research and procurement initiatives.⁴⁴ Attending these conferences to provide credibility to the efforts and senior leadership direction, were the Marine Corps' Director of Plans, Policy and Operations (PP&O) and the Navy's senior representative from the Naval Special Warfare Command.

Bringing together SOF representatives from all services, these conferences were designed to develop a concept to help SOCOM alleviate the current over commitment of low density high demand SOF organizations. One of the first steps taken to help in this effort will be addressed later in this paper with the Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance contribution.

The efforts of this last conference were to take broad functional area categories that support each service's execution of training and missions. Take these categories and identify areas of commonality and supportability while maintaining SOCOM's Vision 2020 and the Marine Corps' future Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare concepts.

The results of that conference, listed by work groups below, was drafted in a message to be released highlighting progress made and future concepts that needed action taken on.⁴⁵

Future Concepts Working Group—Their focus was to aggressively coordinate the continuing development of USSOCOM and USMC concepts and visions. They were tasked with scheduling monthly coordination to review concept milestones, changes and vision to ensure coordinated effort and complimentary support as each area is developed and briefed by senior leadership. Conference results indicated the Marine Corps could provide support to USSOCOM in the short term by providing forces with tailored capabilities to meet identified SOF needs. Short term needs included relief to operations tempo (OPTEMPO) impacts and increased interoperability. The conference also indicated the Marine Corps can provide support to USSOCOM in the long term by providing forces with tailored capabilities to meet identified needs.

Operations Working Group—USMC goal is to make a visible force contribution to USSOCOM on a permanent basis. The working group discussed a permanent assignment of a Force Recon Platoon as a possibility, but it is dependant upon identification of a required capability that SOCs do not currently have. The group indicated Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) and ARG/MEUs can realize significant gains in operational capabilities as well as engagement options with a more extensive interaction during ARG/MEU deployments to gaining theaters. The reinstatement of conducting formal briefings to TSOCs as the ARG/MEU enters a theater would ensure greater knowledge of the current theater situation, friendly force dispositions, threat, exercises (with potential for joint participation), upcoming events and Combatant Commanders' initiatives and priorities. The planning group recommended TSOCs and ARG/MEUs exchange liaison officers for the duration of the deployment. The board made a final recommendation that HQMC and MARFOR component commanders should coordinate Marine Corps attendance and participation at the USSOCOM Worldwide Operations Conference and JCS/Combatant Commanders' Exercise Planning Conferences.

Training Working Group—The recommendation from this group was to conduct liaison officer (LNO's) exchanges between the MEUs and JSOC. Both organizations would conduct interoperability training in progressive phases prior to deployment.

Information Operations Working Group—This group agreed in principle to extend the human and technical aspects of conducting psychological operations (PSYOPS) ashore. The board recommended the Marine Corps should develop distinct PSYOP capabilities. The board also recommended an exchange program of USMC and SOF personnel.

Communications/C4 Working Group—This group indicated MAGTF and TSOC planners need to understand strategic, operational and tactical communications capabilities. The potential exists for SOF/USMC interface between larger tactical communication systems and they must be fully interoperable. The requirement for an automated interoperable C4 planning tool system was stated to allow both organizations to share information.

Intelligence Working Group—Four areas were combined into this subject-working group: Special Operations Joint Intelligence Collaboration Center (SOJICC), Special Operations Debriefing and Retrieval System (SODARS), Integrated Survey Program (ISP), and Marine Corps Intelligence Agency Data Management. This group highlighted the need to close the gap between Marine and SOF requirements for modular scaleable equipment, capable of air, ground, and maritime operations.

Equipment and Technology Working Group—Both the Marine Corps and USSOCOM have expressed the urgent requirement for a short range UAV. The Pointer System was chosen by SOCOM and the Dragon Eye was selected by the Marine Corps. Both systems are produced by the same developer and have similar characteristics. Other similar requirements have been identified such as the need for a shoulder launched novel explosive warhead, small lightweight intelligence broadcast receiver, the replacement of aging radio systems and the need for a light weight counter-motar radar.

Aviation Working Group—The first requirement identified was a need for a Memorandum of Agreement for aviation training between USSOCOM and USMC. One of the underlying themes of the MOA must address what mission capabilities need to be possessed by Marine aviation units in order to support SOCOM. Once the mission capabilities requirement is established, then the equipment required to provide the capability will be identified.

The Marine Corps and SOCOM will continue the efforts of these type conferences through future conferences and working groups to come to closure on many of the action items. Keeping focus, tracking progress and setting milestones with objectives must be a priority to keep the momentum going, a tough job in light of the current world situation.

In examining what support the Marine Corps is capable of providing special operations, Table 1. shows a compare and contrast between MEU (SOC) and special operations missions, highlighting the commonality between the two.

<p><u>MEU (SOC) MISSIONS</u></p> <p><u>OPERATIONS OTHER THAN WAR</u></p> <p>PEACE KEEPING</p> <p>**PEACE ENFORCEMENT</p> <p><i>JOINT/COMBINED/INSTRUCTION TEAM</i></p> <p><i>HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE/DISASTER RELIEF</i></p> <p>**SECURITY OPERATIONS</p> <p>**NONCOMBATANT EVACUATION OPS</p> <p>REINFORCEMENT OPS</p> <p><u>AMPHIBIOUS OPS</u></p> <p>AMPHIBIOUS DEMONSTRATION</p> <p><i>AMPHIBIOUS RAID</i></p> <p>AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT</p> <p>AMPHIBIOUS WITHDRAWAL</p> <p><u>SUPPORTING OPERATIONS</u></p> <p>TACTICAL DECEPTION OPS</p> <p>**INITIAL TERMINAL GUIDANCE</p> <p>SIGNALS INTELLIGENCE/</p> <p>ELECTRONIC WARFARE</p> <p>**MILITARY OPERATIONS IN URBAN TERRAIN</p> <p><i>RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE</i></p> <p>**FIRE SUPPORT PLANNING IN JOINT COMBINED/</p> <p>ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>COUNTER INTELLIGENCE</p> <p>**AIRFIELD PORT SEIZURE</p> <p>SHOW OF FORCE OPERATIONS</p> <p>**EXPEDITIONARY AIRFIELD OPERATIONS</p> <p>**JOINT TASK FORCE ENABLING OPERATIONS</p> <p><i>SNIPING OPERATIONS</i></p> <p><u>DIRECT ACTION/MARITIME SPECIAL OPERATIONS</u></p> <p><i>IN-EXTREMIS HOSTAGE RECOVERY</i></p> <p><i>SEIZURE/RECOVERY OF OFFSHORE ENERGY FACILITIES</i></p> <p><i>SPECIALIZED DEMOLITION OPERATIONS</i></p> <p><i>TACTICAL RECOVERY OF AIRCRAFT AND PERSONNEL</i></p> <p><i>SEIZURE/RECOVERY OF SELECTED PERSONNEL OR MATERIAL</i></p> <p><i>COUNTER PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION</i></p> <p>**VISIT, BOARD, SEARCH AND SEIZURE OF VESSELS</p> <p>Missions in bold italics indicate mission commonality</p> <p>**indicates mission areas of supportability to SOF</p>	<p><u>SOF PRINCIPAL MISSIONS</u></p> <p><i>COUNTERPROLIFERATION</i></p> <p><i>COMBATTING TERRORISM</i></p> <p>FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE</p> <p><i>SPECIAL RECONNAISSANCE</i></p> <p><i>DIRECT ACTION</i></p> <p>PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS</p> <p><i>CIVIL AFFAIRS</i></p> <p>UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE</p> <p>INFORMATION OPERATIONS</p> <p><u>SOF COLLATERAL ACTIVITIES</u></p> <p><i>COALITION SUPPORT</i></p> <p><i>COMBAT SEARCH AND RESCUE</i></p> <p>COUNTERDRUG ACTIVITIES</p> <p><i>HUMANITARIAN DEMINING</i></p> <p><i>HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE</i></p> <p><i>SECURITY ASSISTANCE</i></p> <p>SPECIAL ACTIVITIES</p>
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TABLE 1. MEU (SOC) AND SOF MISSIONS⁴⁶

ASSIGNMENT OF A MARINE CORPS GENERAL OFFICER TO USSOCOM-“Not only is the U.S. Special Operations Command likely to get its first elite Marine force next year, it's also getting its first Marine general. Brig. Gen.-select Dennis Hejlik, currently the principle director for special operations and combating terrorism at the Pentagon, is expected to become chief of staff at SOCOM in October, Marine officials said”⁴⁷

The placement of a Marine Corps general officer on the staff at SOCOM is indicative of the long term commitment to strengthen ties between the two organizations. General Hejlik is currently in place at USSOCOM functioning as the Chief of Staff for USSOCOM.

MARINE CORPS STAFF OFFICERS ASSIGNED TO SOF-As the conflict in Afghanistan began to develop and it became evident SOF was going to take a leading and sustained role in the conflict, SOCOM found itself unable to fill all of the staff officer requirements at the SOCCENT, JFSOCC and JSOTF levels. The senior Marine on the SOCOM staff along with Headquarters Marine Corps, explored alternative options to fill the void. They offered a solution to fill the required billets with Marine Corps officers and, to as much extent as possible, officers who had special operations experience.

These officers were assigned extended temporary duty to the various staffs. Officers varied in expertise areas ranging from previous SOF experience, MEU (SOC) experience, aviation, infantry, logistics, civil affairs, and intelligence. These officers were spread throughout the staffs of SOCCENT, CJSOTF-S in Masirah, CJTF-KBAR at Kandahar, JFSOCC at Qatar, TF-Bowie in Bagram and the Crisis Response Element in Qatar. These officers fulfilled the normal functional staff duties in whichever organization they were assigned to, and carried out a secondary role of acting as a Marine LNO when required as Marine interoperability issues arose. Along with the required planning assistance, they helped develop dialogue between SOCOM and USMC planners providing an awareness of SOF and Marine Corps complimentary capabilities. These billets consisted of active duty Marines and reserve officers who provided a measure of increased interoperability especially during operations in Kandahar providing crucial links between 26 MEU (SOC), TF-58 and CJTF-KBAR.

EXCHANGE PROGRAMS-Long before the events of September 11, the Marine Corps and other special operations aviation units maintained an exchange officer program. In the late 1980's, the Marine Corps provided an exchange officer to the 55th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) at Hurlburt Field, FL.; the 55th SOS flew the MH-60 helicopters. Also during that time, the Army's TF-160 provided an exchange pilot to the Marine Corps' Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1) to function as an instructor. This billet was of extreme importance due to the regularity of TF-160 aircrews attending the Weapons and Tactics

Instructor (WTI) class that was run by MAWTS-1. Beginning in 1992, the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) eliminated the 55th SOS exchange program and established a new one with the 20th SOS flying the MH-53J Pave Low helicopter. This exchange program is still in existence today.

In 1993, the Marine Corps and TF-160 began an exchange officer program in which a Marine Corps AH-1W pilot would be assigned to the 160th Special Operations Regiment (SOAR). This exchange program is still in existence today as well.

In 1995, the 20th SOS participated for the first time in sending pilots through the WTI course. This helped define commonality and provide a venue for exchange of ideas and tactics. It was also a sedge way for the upcoming V-22 program, which was beginning to gain momentum during that period. An attempt was also made to develop an exchange officer slot for an Air Force MH-53J pilot to be assigned to the MAWTS-1 staff as an instructor pilot. These efforts were fruitless due to the shortage of Pave Low pilots during that timeframe. The Pave Low pilot shortage has been alleviated for the time being, therefore the MAWTS-1 exchange should be explored again by both the Marine Corps and AFSOC.

AFSOC has recently established their own aviation tactics school that is designed to focus more on SOF missions. The Marine Corps should explore possibilities of establishing an exchange officer at this school that would be a link between this school and MAWTS-1.

The most significant benefit of the current exchange officer program is it opened the doors for bilateral deployments for training (DFTs) between the 20th SOS and the Marine Corps CH-53E squadrons (HMH-461). These DFTs have helped significantly in the exchange of tactics, training and procedures (TTPs) which have eliminated some of the barriers normally encountered when working together during an operation.

AFGHANISTAN-Two Marine Corps Expeditionary Units (26th and 15th) scheduled for normal deployments were rerouted to the Arabian Sea shortly after the events of September 11, 2001. On October 20, two Marine Corps CH-53E helicopters were used to recover a downed Army Black Hawk. In November, BG James M. Mattis, the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) Commander for an exercise that had just concluded in Egypt, Bright Star, was put in charge of 26th and 15th MEUs to form up Task Force 58 (TF-58) essentially forming up a MEB (-) command. Shortly thereafter, TF-58, along with SOF forces from Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-South (known as Combined Joint Task Force K-Bar (CJTF-KBAR)) established Camp Rhino at a remote airfield south of Kandahar, Afghanistan. Operations were conducted from the forward operating base to include Force Recon "Hunter-Killer" teams. Within hours of Recon's first venture from the camp, they engaged in a night time point blank

firefight leaving eight enemy dead along a stretch of road known as Route 1. A Recon controlled air strike killed dozens more.⁴⁸ In mid-December, the Marines along with CJTF-KBAR began their movement north towards the airfield of Kandahar. Once the airfield and facilities were seized, TF-58 and CJTF-KBAR began operations and expanded the capabilities of the airfield.

While at Kandahar, extensive Sensitive Site Exploitation (SSE), Special Reconnaissance (SR) and Direct Action (DA) missions were conducted against known Taliban and AlQuada sites. Working in unison with each other and taking advantage of each force's capabilities, a partnership was formed. Both forces in unison were effective in carrying out the Commander of CENTCOM's SR/DA strategy. Along with conducting their own SOF type missions, the Marines supported TF-KBAR's SSE/SR/DA missions by providing airfield security, patrolling, blocking forces, extensive logistics support, setting up training ranges, communications support through their Joint Task Force Enabler communications suite, Explosive Ordnance Demolitions (EOD) support, and linguist support. The Marines also provided the needed air assets, logistics support, communications augmentation and mobility assets required to support SOF sustained operations.

Why were the Marines needed and why were they used instead of other forces? The Marines were already forward deployed, were the quickest force able to respond, and were already equipped with everything they needed to conduct sustained expeditionary operations without any requirement for existing infrastructure. They also provided a total expeditionary package capability that SOF needed to draw from to support their sustained remote operations at Camp Rhino and Kandahar Airfield. They could not get this capability from another service singular organization at the time.

Noteworthy, was the responsiveness of Marine air to support SOF missions via CH-53E heavy lift support and transport of SOF personnel and supplies with organic KC-130s. During this period, there was a shortage of heavy lift capable SOF rotary wing. AFSOC's MH-53M Paveh's were limited in troop carrying capacity due to the higher elevations of the objective areas and the TF-160's MH-47s were in limited supply. The MEUs' CH-53Es filled this void in supporting many of CJTF-KBAR's SSE/SR/DA/QRF missions. The MEU's KC-130s also assisted special operations in the movement of SOF personnel and equipment between Kandahar and Bagram. Without this responsive support, TF-KBAR would not have been able to execute its missions in the timeline that had been directed by CENTCOM. The MEU's CH-53Es were also called upon for planning in supporting a special mission unit (SMU) operation as well.

CH-46s and the AH-1Ws also supported coalition SOF through mission support and tactical training.

Currently, a detachment of six Marine Corps AV-8B's is supporting SOF out of Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. The aircraft are equipped with the new Litening II extended range targeting pod which allows the aircraft to provide SOF personnel with current intelligence. Their role of providing the latest intelligence to the mission commander was rolled into other missions that included Hunter-Killer ops, reconnaissance, close air support, and escort flights of other coalition aircraft or ground convoys. Their support has been crucial to the efforts in that area. "One SOF air commander stated that the AV-8B participation in a recent night operation was 'lauded by his crews' because of its ability to 'use the IR pointer to mark the way for the final assault to capture key Al-Qaida and Taliban personnel.'"⁴⁹

Operation Enduring Freedom was a perfect opportunity for the Marine Corps and USSOCOM to put aside past differences and work towards closing the gap between the two organizations. Operation Enduring Freedom validated the need to put resources back into special operations, and the Marine Corps may be the only organization which already possesses the assets required to beef up our country's special operations capabilities.

DOES THE FUTURE HOLD A STANDING PLACE FOR THE MARINE CORPS IN SPECIAL OPERATIONS?

"Marines have to shed a 20th-century mentality—and shed the word 'amphibious,' which is a legacy term—and really understand the power of expeditionary warfare in support of the joint warfighter,' Jones said. 'To this end...Marines must take steps to be able to respond more quickly, project power farther and sustain operations longer.'"⁵⁰

The Marine Corps' increased involvement with SOF should be evaluated on two criteria as offered up by Ltcol Rogish when he addressed this same issue in his July 1992 article published in the Marine Corps Gazette, "Do Marines Belong in USSOCOM?" "First, is it good for the country?, and second, does it support the battlefield commander? A joint special operations command that includes all Service special operations capabilities can better tailor forces to respond to the taskings of the National Command Authorities and the combatant CinCs."⁵¹

Four other questions need to be asked in addressing this issue of the Marine Corps' future participation in special operations. Does SOCOM want the Marine Corps' help? What areas do they need assistance in? Does the Marine Corps have the capability to provide that assistance? How would the Marine Corps support it?

The answer to the first two questions is yes, as indicated by the public statements made by the Secretary of Defense, General Holland and General Jones. The answers to the other four questions were addressed in the planning conference discussed earlier in this paper.

SOCOM indicated through their MOA, and the planning conferences, that assistance is required to help support their command in the WOT and other on going mission areas and that they do want the Marine Corps' assistance. The USMC/SOCOM planning conferences have highlighted areas of commonality in supporting their efforts. The Secretary of Defense has indicated in several news releases that the Army's SF and heavy lift capable helicopters are having difficulties meeting the demand. Through the author's experiences and conversations with SOF personnel, Air Force Special tactics personnel are in extreme demand as well as tactical air control parties (TACPs), air refuel capable C-130s that would also be used in a cargo carrying capacity, expeditionary maneuverable air bases (aka air capable ships) and expeditionary logistics.

A less glamorous area of SOF that needs assistance as well, is Civil Affairs. "The Army has only one active-duty Civil affairs unit, the 96th. About 96 percent of its Civil Affairs specialists are reservist. "We don't have enough Civil Affairs [experts] in both the active and reserve side," said Thomas F. Hall, assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs.⁵² Civil Affairs has been a part of USSOCOM since 1987 and provides a wide array of capabilities not normally associated with other military units, capabilities that compliment the strategic endstate of special operations.

SERVICE VISIONS-

Marine Corps' Expeditionary Warfare—The Marine Corps plans to continue its application of maneuver warfare as America's expeditionary force in readiness to fight and win our nation's battles. The major change in philosophy will be "the gradual shift in reliance from the quantitative characteristics of warfare—mass and volume—to a realization that qualitative factors (speed, stealth, precision, and sustainability) have become increasingly important facets of modern warfare."⁵³ The future direction of the Marine Corps will provide a service force that will continue to be very complimentary to the roles and missions of SOF, a service force that is certainly qualified and capable in fighting asymmetrical threats and combating terrorism.

USSOCOM—Fulfilling today's and tomorrow's SOF shortages with the long term vision of SOCOM's desired operational capabilities will be important. In USSOCOM's Posture Statement released in 2000, special operations' desired capabilities for the future are :

improved personnel survivability, improving WMD counterproliferation missions, improved mobility in denied areas, improved capability to recruit and train, improve effective use of information technologies, improved sensory enhancement, improved ability of SOF to integrate, operate, and sustain activities with DOD forces and national and international agencies, improved capability to fully interface and operate with the space surveillance network, improved capability to utilize advances in technology for remote reconnaissance, and improve multi-role/multi-purpose weapons.⁵⁴

MARSOC DETACHMENT—BRIDGING THE GAP

In January (2002), a Marine Corps planning group was sent to SOCOM to address the first step in providing a significant Marine Corps contribution to special operations. The results of that conference developed a “proof of concept” force contribution to SOCOM.

A unit of about 75 Marines, led by a Marine lieutenant colonel has been proposed, Capt Robert Harward, A Navy seal who commands Naval Special Warfare Group One, told Inside the Navy last week. Similarly, Lt. Gen. Emil Bedard, the Marine Corps’ head of plans, policies and operations, recently told reporters a “very small, specialize unit”—less than 100 Marines to start—would be integrated into SOCOM for counterterrorism missions.⁵⁵

Force Recon was a perfect choice on the Marine Corps’ behalf since they had suffered what the other special operation forces had suffered in the 70’s and 80’s; a degradation in capabilities due to neglect by the conventional side of the Marine Corps. “In a July 1999 interview, Jones said, ‘I personally think that we have atrophied and done damage to our reconnaissance mission in the Marine Corps, which is historically one of the things we have prided ourselves in since World War II.’”⁵⁶ Even though the Navy had initially drug their heels in letting their SEALs go, the benefits gained by being a part of the SOCOM team certainly showed the gain out weighed the cost. It has been viewed this proposed plan will be a ‘Win-Win’ for all involved; fix the broke Force Recon and assist SOCOM at the same time.

“Mission Statement: USMC detachment augments a deploying NSW Squadron’s capability to conduct special reconnaissance, direct action, coalition support, limited foreign internal defense and other missions as required, in support of joint and fleet commanders in order to test the ‘Proof of Concept’ for a USMC force contribution to USSOCOM.”⁵⁷

The concept consists of an 83 man detachment that will be globally sourced by the Marine Corps and will be a pay as you go contribution. The duration of this proof of concept is two years at which point in time an evaluation will be made in the status of the arrangement. A Marine Corps LtCol will head the detachment, with appropriate manning to cover a broad spectrum of reconnaissance expertise to include, fire support, an aviation planning and intelligence.

Training for this detachment will consist of three phases. Phase I will consist of Individual Training and MOS qualification. Phase II will consist of training in the following areas: Communications, combat trauma, force fires, weapons and tactics, advance parachute, mobile recon, mountain ops, combatant dive, JRTC mission profile, and MAGTF raids. Phase III will chop the detachment to NSW and will conduct interoperability training.⁵⁸

The command and control relationship will consist of the unit being under operational control (OPCON) to NSW. Even though the detachment is OPCON to NSW, the specifications and intent of the MOA is designed to preserve the tactical integrity of the unit as much as practicable in order to properly evaluate the “proof of concept.”

The detachment will be stood up on the west coast to facilitate the interaction required with the west coast based Naval Special Warfare Group One (NSWG-1). The following timelines will be utilized for the detachment:

- October 02—Commander will be identified with a Command element staff, NSW liaison will take place, a training working group will be stood up and the Unit of tables of Organization and Equipment will be developed.
- January 2003—Individual Marines will be identified; facilities will be identified, and individual training will be conducted.
- February 2003—Permanent change of station orders to personnel will be issued. A NSW force allocation conference will be held.
- March 2003—The command element will occupy their facility.
- June 2003—Marines will report to their new headquarters and begin unit training.
- October 2003—The detachment will be assigned under OPCON to NSW. This period marks a minus 180 day prior to deployment.
- April 2004—The detachment under OPCON to NSW will deploy to the respective theater.⁵⁹

As mentioned earlier, the Force Reconnaissance contribution was viewed by the Marine Corps as the one unit which most closely resembled SOF, and its proof of concept deployment would be the least difficult to coordinate. This contribution would also make significant strides in fixing the broken state of Force Recon, which had been one of General Jones’ goals when taking over as Commandant. Figure 1. depicts the planned structure for the MARSOC DET.

MARSOC DETACHMENT

OPCON to NSW



6/72/5
Total: 83

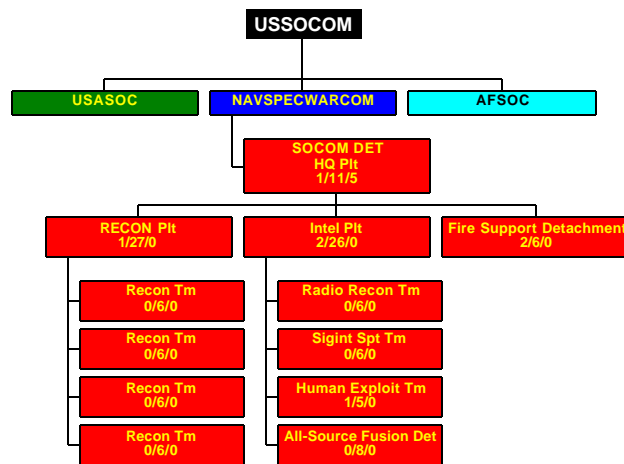


FIGURE 1.-- PLANNED MARSOC DETACHMENT⁶⁰

COURSES OF ACTION AVAILABLE FOR PROVIDING THE MARINE 'NICHE' TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Although Force Recon has been one of the units within the Marine Corps most closely associated with special operations, there are other options available in the Marine Corps that may do a better job in offering assistance to fill SOF mission void areas.

In developing potential contributions to SOCOM, it is important to note an interesting and significant statement made in the SOCOM/USMC planning conference after action report. It made reference to SOCOM executing responsibilities as a service headquarters as well as a combatant commander. The message stated because of this unique characteristic of the USSOCOM headquarters, issues between USSOCOM and USMC would be referred throughout the message as "between services"⁶¹; a statement almost reminiscent of the earlier attempts to make SOCOM a sixth service. This fact is significant in determining how the Marine Corps could/should provide assistance, because USSOCOM is a unified combatant commander that functions in many ways like a service and is responsible for equipping and training forces assigned to them. With the recent decision of making USSOCOM a supported combatant commander, USSOCOM will now develop into an even more significant command in the food chain; most likely changing the way services will interact with special operations. With this

recent change, USSOCOM will still remain a supporting commander for TSOCs under their respective combatant commander when conducting special operations in support of other crisis areas, but SOCOM has now been elevated to being the supported commander for missions directly linked to terrorism.

Taking this into account, this section will explore what courses of action are available in providing the Marine Corps 'niche' to special operations. In examining and comparing available courses of action (COAs), it is important that the options be examined for end state suitability. Does the COA assist in fulfilling the current shortage and need for additional SOF capable forces? Does the COA provide a unique and non-redundant capability? Is it a capability the Marine Corps currently possesses? Does the COA fulfill the standards for units assigned to SOF?

In identifying a unique contribution the Marine Corps can offer SOCOM, the one niche the Marine Corps has that SOCOM does not, is the expeditionary MAGTF concept. Marines typically deploy and are employed as scalable, tailorable, combined-arms forces known as MAGTFs. All MAGTFs, regardless of size and composition according to the required mission, consist of four major elements: a command element (CE), ground combat element (GCE), aviation combat element (ACE), and combat service support element (CSSE).⁶² When employed together, a JTF or JSOTF commander has a synergistic capability provided by the 'total package' of the MAGTF.

The Marine Corps currently employs four types of MAGTFs—the Marine Expeditionary Force, the Marine Expeditionary Brigade, the Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) and Special Purpose MAGTFs (SPMAGTFs). SPMAGTFs are designed for a very specific purpose and are normally constituted for only a short period of time and specific mission.

The Marine Corps should use this niche as the nucleus in developing a unique contribution to SOCOM. There are a limitless numbers of options in where the Marine Corps could assist SOCOM in special operations but for the purpose of this discussion, it will be limited to four courses of action. Each COA will be offered up with arguments for and against. Following the COA proposals, additional issues that must be resolved to support the contributions will be listed.

AVAILABLE COURSES OF ACTION TO SUPPORTING SPECIAL OPERATIONS

COA 1 LIMIT ROLE TO THAT OF A GENERAL PURPOSE FORCE—Maintain status quo and do not contribute any forces directly to SOCOM. Force Recon Det ‘proof of concept’ is discontinued after initial deployment.

COA 2 SPECIAL OPERATIONS MARINE FORCE RECON DET—Limit Marine Corps direct involvement with SOCOM to the Force Recon Det. Pursue other involvement as interoperability only. The Marine Corps provides additional assistance to USSOCOM only as needed in a supporting role.

COA 3 SPECIAL OPERATIONS MEU—Provide an increased contribution to SOCOM with the MEUs; beyond the current “Special Operations Capable” concept.

COA 4 SPECIAL OPERATIONS MEB—Transform the current 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-terrorism) (4th MEB (AT)) into a special operations MAGTF contribution force to SOCOM.

Discussion:

COA 1-- MAINTAIN STATUS QUO- This course of action would be used if the Marine Corps would decide not to increase its involvement with special operations and maintain the status quo of the past 15 years by not making any additional contributions to SOCOM. Once the test period runs out on the Force Recon ‘Proof of Concept’ deployment, the MARSOC detachment is disbanded.

Arguments against-Although many traditionalists would prefer to see this course of action, it clearly fails to meet the first criteria of attempting to fill a void in this nation’s capabilities. If this course of action is chosen, the door to USSOCOM will be closed in the Marine Corps’ face for good. Relations between the two organizations would most certainly degrade. Force Recon would again fall into a period of degradation in capabilities.

Undoubtedly, today’s Corps is well prepared for joint operations and contributes greatly to the security of our Nation. However, to the detriment of both our Corps and Nation, there remains one area in which we are not fully integrated into the “joint world.” If our Corps is to continue to assist in building the most capable force to defend the United States, then we must clear one final hurdle and petition for the creation of a Marine component under the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)⁶³

COA 2--LIMIT USMC SOCOM CONTRIBUTION TO CURRENT FORCE RECON DET

This course of action would limit the contributions to SOCOM to the current Force Recon Detachment. If this course of action is chosen on a permanent basis, a standing command and

control relationship would have to be developed. Force Recon would eventually have to come out from under the NAVSPECWARGRP control and stand as a separate entity in the SOCOM community. The benefit of this course of action is that the Force Recon Det would certainly benefit from the focused training, equipment and the MFP-11 money used to fund the MARSOC detachment. After the concept is proven successful, Force Recon would become a full card carrying member of SOCOM. Until that point, the Force Recon Det is a Marine Corps funded pay as you go concept.

Arguments against—Although this is a visible contribution to SOCOM, it does not provide SOCOM anything unique or fulfill the critical areas that are currently over extended by SOCOM. Additional trigger pullers are not what SOCOM needs at this point. The force recon detachment also is not complimented with the accompanying MAGTF pieces to make it an even more effective fighting force.

Additionally, Marine commanders may feel the absence of their Force recon units and develop a substitute capability within the remaining assets (such as battalion recon) to replace the capability Force Recon once provided the MAGTF directly.

The next two courses of action will be proposals that employ the MAGTF concept; therefore providing the Marine niche to SOCOM.

COA 3--DIRECT CONTRIBUTION OF THE MEU TO SOCOM—The debate on the association of the MEU and SOF has been long and hard within the ranks of the Marine Corps. After General Gray had implemented the concept of MEU “special operations capable”, debates occurred whether the Marine Corps should have even gone that far with our MEUs. Traditionalists argued the Corps should stay with its traditional concept of a general purpose amphibious force. Others argued the MEU had a significant contribution to SOF. Articles in the Marine Corps Gazette beginning in 1986 addressed the subject such as Capt Western’s proposal of “Countering Terrorism with the MAU”.

General Gray despite the arguments “...was so impressed with the improvement in operational proficiency that the SOC program made in the CORPS as a whole that he directed that all MAGTFs be SOC by the year 2000.”⁶⁴

The MEU (SOC), with the exception of possibly Force Recon, has been the most closely associated Marine Corps unit with SOCOM over the past 15 years. Rightly so since this had been the Marine Corps’ official contribution to SOCOM following the reorganization in 1987. Made up of about 2,200 Marines and sailors, the MEU is truly the ‘McGuyver Tool’ of the Marine Corps. It has been the most employed force the Marine possesses and has been used in a variety of roles for theater commanders.

Missions and standards for the MEUs were redesigned after the special operations capable designation was assigned. "The Corps began implementing these structural changes in earnest in 1985 with the establishment of special operations training groups (SOTGs), which were designed to guide units through special skills training they needed and coordinate with outside agencies in equipment testing and acquisition."⁶⁵ A majority of the Marine Corps' efforts during the 1980's revolved around how to make the MEU SOC program work and to make it a better contribution to the Combatant Commander.

When Gen Gray became Commandant in 1987, an immediate, noticeable emphasis was applied to the SOC program....Although the initial operational focus of MEU (SOC)s was the Mediterranean littorals, primarily as contingency forces to counter the increasing terrorist threat there, company-sized contingency MAGTFs that deployed to the Persian Gulf in 1986/87 validated basic SOC precepts and techniques in oil platform raids.⁶⁶

As depicted earlier in Table 1., there are several areas of commonality between SOF missions and those missions listed for the MEUs. This is probably why the cohesion and synergy created between 26 MEU (SOC) and CJSOTF-S during operations in Afghanistan was so great. The MEU provided the JSOTF the special operations similarity but also brought much more to the table with its MAGTF synergy created by the combination of air, ground, and logistics into one unit. There is naturally, more commonality between the Marine Corps and SOF than there is between the Marine Corps and conventional forces. This is why the Marine Corps and SOF have routinely found themselves working together in conducting NEOs, CSAR or other peacekeeping/enforcing operations, and most recently conducting bilateral SOF missions in the Philippines.

A key point for Joint Force Commanders and JSOTF commanders to consider in employment options of the MEU, is that it is an integrated modular force that can be tailored to the requirements of a specific mission.⁶⁷ This has often been the stumbling block for MEU and SOF integration; the SOF reluctance in MEU employment is it is too big and "we don't need an amphibious assault with battalion's storming the beach with their tanks."⁶⁸

As evidenced during operations at Kandahar, the MEU can be scaled down and tailored to support the mission. The battalion was able to scale its forces to either provide airfield security, Quick Reaction Force in support of SOF missions (the same mission profile the Rangers were assigned), or even break down into smaller units such as providing a platoon to support SSE with the SEALs. The MSSG provided combat service support for the joint and

coalition personnel to include food, water, fuel, and construction materials. The MSSG also provided ground maintenance support, electrical, mobile electric power, health and medical support.⁶⁹ The aviation element provided extensive heavy lift helicopter support, KC-130 air refueling and logistics support, AH-1W gunship support, and medium lift helicopter support. The headquarters element provided C2 augmentation and extensive intelligence support to the JSOTF.

Arguments against—One of the biggest drawbacks to incorporating the MEU into special operations is that the MEU forms up and then disbands every 12 months. Because of this, the first six months are devoted to high intensity training, culminating with their special operations evaluation. Following the six month deployment that occurs next, the organizations (battalion, MSSG, ACE) are sent back to their parent organizations and the process starts over again. What makes this a drawback in the SOF community, is the consistency lost with the personnel turnover and the training that is limited in duration and focus. Absolutely no more training can be added to the six-month training plan, since there is no white space now on the training calendar to accommodate any additional training events.⁷⁰ Dropping the in-extremis hostage rescue (IHR) mission from the MEU mission requirements would help free up some training space the MEU could devote elsewhere. IHR is the least likely mission the MEU would be asked to execute (in reality either the nation involved or SMEs would be used before the MEU), making the extensive amount of training required to prepare for it not cost productive.

SOF would argue that with a turnover of 100% of its personnel (with exception of the headquarters element), the MEU more resembles a temporary JTF vice a standing functional unit. Additionally SOF personnel expect to see the same faces during their planning, training events, exercises and during operations.⁷¹ A turnover of personnel every 12 months would not allow that.

The only option to solve this problem would be the concept of standing MEUs. This concept is not new and has been debated before. It is usually discarded by the traditionalists who believe in a hierarchical Marine Corps structure focused on heavier forces. The same traditionalists General Gray had to try to convince in tailoring the Marine Corps to a lighter, more maneuverable lethal force. Another argument against MEU integration into USSOCOM, is the loss incurred by the Marine Corps if it gave up all of its MEUs. Unless the Marine Corps would be willing to give up operational control of its MEUs to SOCOM, the relationship will be limited to a “supporting/supported one.”⁷² A plan for one or two standing MEUs assigned to SOCOM would be a possible option, however they could not be deployed in the manner MEUs are now due to the high operational tempo that would be associated with it.

The MEU does fulfill the requirements as stated earlier, but the risk and price may be too high for the Marine Corps to pay. Adding additional training is neither an option for the earlier stated reason. The only option that exists, other than standing MEUs, is more of a supporting/supported relationship starting with pre-deployment training between the MEUs and SOCOM integrated into the existing training plans. During deployment the MEUs and TSOCs would conduct training exercises together in theater to establish some level of cohesion. This would take significant commitment by both parties and could very easily drift back to status quo.

Aside from the MEU concept, one additional course of action exists employing the principals of the MAGTF. This MAGTF would be a standing organization allowing for focused training and continuity amongst the assigned units, and could be a force assigned to SOCOM without severe loss to the existing Marine Corps capabilities. This concept would be the Special Operations Marine Expeditionary Brigade (SOMEB).

COURSE OF ACTION 4—PROVIDE A STANDING SPECIAL OPERATIONS MEB (SOMEB)-

In September 2001, the 32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps General James L. Jones directed the reactivation of the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) as an anti-terrorism organization within the U.S. Marine Corps forces, Atlantic. The mission of the 4th MEB (AT) is to provide Unified Combatant Commanders with rapidly deployable and sustainable specialized anti-terrorism forces to deter, detect, defend, and conduct initial incident response to combat the threat of terrorism worldwide.⁷³

The 4th MEB (AT) consists of a MEB command element, an anti-terrorism battalion (ATBN), the Marine Corps Security Force Battalion (MCSFB), the Marine Security Guard Battalion (MSG) and the Chemical-Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF). The MEB also has the ability to form the nucleus of for an anti-terrorism Marine Air-Ground Task force (MAGTF) that includes organic aviation and logistical support for anti-terror operations.⁷⁴

The 4th MEB (AT)'s mission profiles are:

- Embassy security/reinforcement and security for other U.S. facilities overseas.
- Port security for an MPF off-load during a high-threat terrorism environment.
- Airfield security for U.S. forces in a high-threat terrorist environment.
- Provide forward operating base (FOB) security and quick reaction forces (QRF) for Special Operations Forces (SOF).
- Personal protective details for high-risk personnel during high-visibility events.

- Conduct vulnerability assessments for high-risk U.S. facilities overseas.
- CBRNE incident response in an expeditionary or domestic environment.
- Reinforcement of other MAGTF/Joint coalition forces.
- Conduct anti-terrorism security patrols, surveillance, and counter surveillance.
- Establish conditions necessary for follow on forces to conduct:
 - Sustained operations ashore.
 - Humanitarian Aid
 - Mass Casualty Response⁷⁵

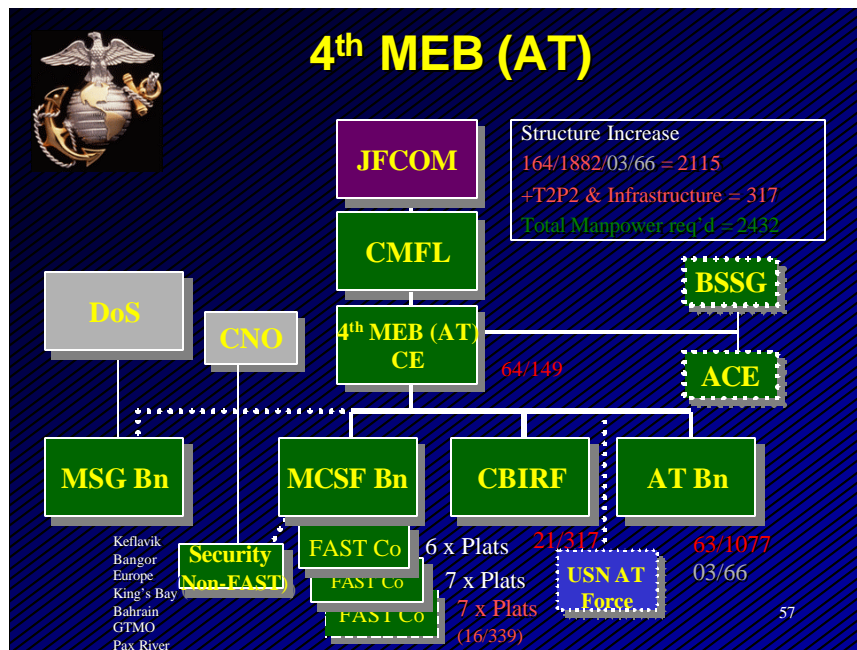


FIGURE 2.--PLANNED ORGANIZATION OF 4TH MEB (AT)⁷⁶

The 4th MEB (AT) concept depicted in Figure 2., would be an exceptional candidate as a force offering to USSOCOM. A modification of its organization and capabilities could provide a unique capability to SOCOM. As it stands right now however, 4^h MEB (AT) is a single service unilateral effort towards the WOT, whose contributions would be better served through a joint effort with USSOCOM. Under the SOCOM umbrella, 4th MEB (AT), (renamed SOMEb) would be able to conduct focused, specialized training and be structured for force continuity therefore increasing the capabilities and readiness levels of the force.

Using the current structure of the 4th MEB (AT), the major thing this organization lacks is the concept of a standing MAGTF. To complete the MAGTF composition, logistics and a dedicated air piece must be added. Addition of these two pieces would fulfill the MAGTF principle that has been proven successful and provides the unique niche to SOCOM. Essentially what would be provided is a robust MAGTF capability that could perform special operations missions and provides a complimentary link with forward deployed MEUs.

The existing 4th MEB (AT) would be modified as follows to form the SOMEb:

Command Element-The CE would be structured similar to how the MEUs are now. The intelligence and communications capabilities would have to be extremely robust and compatible with SOCOM capabilities.

Battalion (REIN)-The SOMEb Battalion's capabilities would be based on the same skills found in a MEU Infantry Battalion and compatible with those of a Ranger Battalion. Their core training and mission essential task lists (METLS) would be focused on understanding and countering terrorist tactics and operations, reconnaissance/surveillance, surveillance detection and counter-surveillance skills. The required special operations skills would be very similar to those METLS the 4th MEB (AT) Battalion is training to today.⁷⁷

The battalion would travel lighter though in equipment than a battalion associated with the MEU—tanks and artillery would not be part of their Table of Equipment. Light Armored Vehicles would still remain and be increased in numbers while the fire support assets would be beefed up with light, quick firing mortar type weaponry. The Boat Raid Company capability would be maintained to support operations in the littoral areas.

The Marine Corps Fighting Lab was also working on an experimental motor system that could be employed with helicopters, which if it proves successful would join the battalion's arsenal. As the Expeditionary Strike Group begins to take form, it will also provide extensive firepower to the unit with its increased naval gunfire capabilities.

A possible add on to the battalion's capabilities would be the addition of a CAP to help augment Army SF efforts, since the CAP's mission in Viet Nam was similar to some of the missions SF is trying to do today.

CBIRF—The current Chemical Biological Incident Response Force is designed to provide a force to respond to a credible threat of a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or high yield explosive (CBRNE) incident. This unit, as part of SOMEb, would assist local, state and federal agencies and designated Combatant Commanders in consequent management of a weapons of mass destruction type incident.⁷⁸

Brigade Service Support Group—This would be the logistical piece required to support the final approved structure of the SOMEb. It would need to be tailored to support special operations in an expeditionary environment without reliance on host nation infrastructure. Its organization would be based off the current template used for the normal MEB and the MEU (SOC) with modifications to make it responsive to the stated needs by SOCOM.

Aviation Combat Element—The focus of this element would be providing the stated needs of SOCOM—that of heavy lift capable, air refuelable helicopters and KC-130 tanker/cargo support. When the V-22 comes on line this would be an added benefit to the aviation package and would compliment AFSOC's V-22 assets. AH-1Ws, AV-8's and F/A-18's would be required for fire support and other missions similar to those being conducted now in support of special operations in Afghanistan. Future concepts of a Quad Tilt Rotor aircraft could be a replacement or augment to the KC-130 providing expeditionary heavy cargo transport and could function as an air refueling tanker. Variants of the Quad tilt rotor might also be configured as gunships employing concepts similar to the AC-130.

A concept paper written by a former MAWTS-1 instructor addressed the aviation issues for the 4th MEB (AT). "If they [4th MEB (AT)] are to be successful, then the aviation unit that supports them will need to be dedicated to this mission, and train to it methodically, with no distractions."⁷⁹ Marine aviation units have been plagued for years with an environment of increasing operations tempo, shortage of parts, and trying to band aid training, trying to do more with less.

His paper also addressed the issues of establishing minimum selection criteria for the pilots and the crew chiefs. The criteria would be established around a minimum number of flight hours and flight qualifications ensuring the aircrews are highly experienced and seasoned similar to the requirements emplaced by other SOF aviation units.⁸⁰

The SOMEb squadron would consist of a composite squadron consisting of:

- 8 CH-53Es (Heavy lift-troops, cargo and resupply)
- 8 AH-1Ws (fire support/escort)
- 3 KC-130s (air refueling/cargo transport)
- 6 AV-8s (fire support/ISR)
- F/A-18s would be provided as needed basis (fire support)

Assets for the SOMEb would have to be globally sourced amongst the Marine Corps. The heaviest costs being associated with aircraft, parts and the experienced personnel required

across all specialties. It is extremely important that the air assets be assigned as a standing part of the SOMEb, and is not just a 'pick up team' as the need arises. Merely providing the assets from other units on an as needed basis would not provide the required training focus required for the aviators (well documented in the MEU training program) and would not be responsive enough to the needs of the SOMEb or USSOCOM.

Force Recon-Force Recon would be put under the SOMEb command to provide the SR/DA capability for the force and would continue providing Force Recon detachments for the MEUs. Force Recon would continue the efforts that are being developed now with their MARSOC DET.

Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO)-The Marine Corps has made the decision to re-stand up the ANGLICOs which had been disbanded in the late 1990's due to force structure cuts. The absence of this capability was immediately felt by the MEUs and Army airborne units they normally supported. These fire support assets would be a perfect compliment to SOF units such as the Army SF, Air Force STS, and the SEALs, and would help to alleviate the current TACP shortage. An ANGLICO would be assigned to the SOMEb to provide comprehensive forward air controlling, fire support coordination and communications. The SOMEb ANGLICO would also still provide detachments to the MEUs, providing another link of SOF compatibility and capability when special operations type missions arise and the MEUs are called to respond.

Marine Corps Reserve Civil Affairs Group- Although the Marine Corps does not have any active duty reserve units, only reserve civil affairs units. When employed these units would train and conduct missions under the SOMEb umbrella. Detachments from the 3^d or 4th Civil Affairs Group (CAG) would routinely be assigned under the operational control of the SOMEb.

Marine PSYOPS-As indicated by the SOCOM/USMC planning groups, the Marine Corps should develop a PSYOPS unit. This unit, when formed would fall under the SOMEb and could eventually expand into the Information Operations/Warfare arena.

Marine Corps Security Force Battalion--The MCSF BN currently assigned to the 4th MEB (AT) is designed to conduct defensive operations in order to deter terrorist attacks. The unit provides armed, anti-terrorism and physical security trained personnel to designated naval installations.⁸¹ Support of this mission would most likely conflict with the needs and desires of SOCOM, therefore the MCSF BN would be dropped from the SOMEb structure and would remain strictly a Marine Corps mission.

Marine Security Guard—The MSG mission will remain as it does today to provide internal security at designated U.S. diplomatic and consular facilities to prevent the compromise

of classified information and would not be part of the SOME⁸². Coordination with the MSG, however, would be a mission enhancer when the requirement arises to conduct liaison with an American embassy in support of SOF operations.

CONCEPT OF EMPLOYMENT

Marine Corps Special Operations Command—To provide the necessary conduit between the SOME⁸², SOCOM, and the Marine Corps, a special operations headquarters would need to be established called the Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC). The headquarters would be commanded by a two star general. Its functional staff would be similar in design to that of ARSOC, AFSOC, and NAVSPECWAR. The SOTG would fall under the MARSOC with the mission to supervise and conduct training for the SOME⁸² and continue training the MEUs. Figure 3. depicts the proposed structure of the SOME⁸² concept.

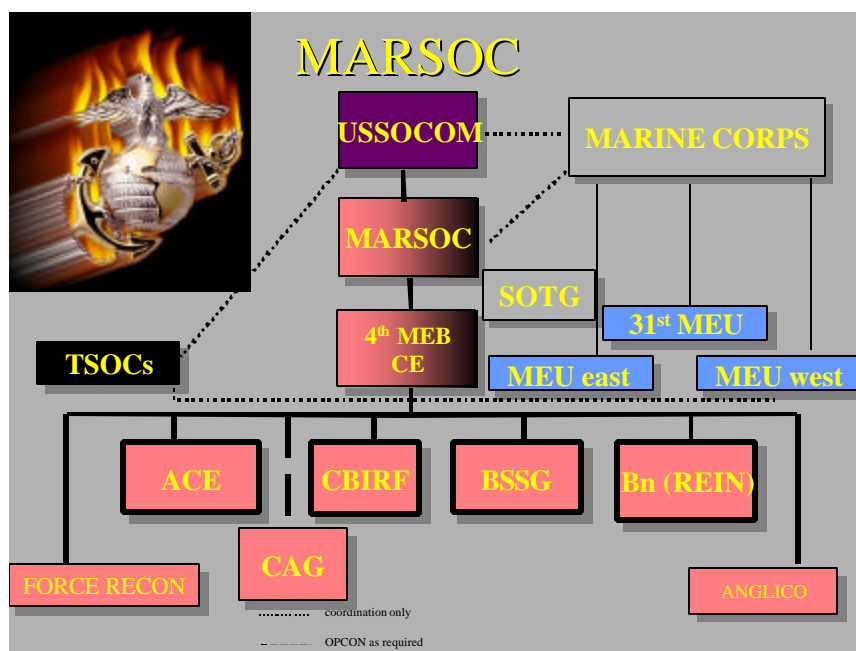


FIGURE 3. PROPOSED MARSOC STRUCTURE

Employment—The MARSOC headquarters and SOME⁸² would be located at Camp Lejeune to take advantage of existing Marine Corps infrastructure. This location would be in close proximity to special operations forces at Ft. Bragg and Little Creek. USSOCOM would assist in the required coordination and training with these other organizations. The SOME⁸²'s

training cycle would be aligned with the existing one for USSOCOM, a three phase yearly cycle. The MEUs (East Coast, West Coast and 31st MEU) would conduct coordination with USSOCOM and the SOMEb during their workup cycles; ideally, conducting training exercises prior to deployment. Training road shows provided by the Joint Special Operations School located in Hurlburt Field, FL., would be conducted to instruct MEU personnel on special operations roles, missions and capabilities. When deployed, the MEUs would incorporate into their exercise training plans, training exercises with deployed SOF units.

Showing how this relationship could work, let's take a notional example in Europe and the Middle East. The 26th MEU is conducting a training exercise with SOF units in Northern Africa when a crisis occurs requiring a response off the Horn of Africa. It is determined by the Combatant Commander that the initial response will require special operations capable forces. SOCEUR and SOCCENT have, in coordination, recommended the employment of 26 MEU and the SOF units it was training with to be the initial response element to link up with the SOMEb and a SMU detachment. The MEU, along with the SOF units re-embark aboard the ship at their training area. The SOMEb, along with the SMU detachment, are flown into the region (when the CV-22 comes on line the forces would deploy from the United States in these aircraft). The SOMEb and SMU link up with the Expeditionary Strike Group (the group the MEU is deployed with) and SOF forces at a forward staging base. If time permits, a rehearsal is conducted. Using a combination of all the forces, the mission is executed. Fire support is provided by the ESG and the organic AH-1Ws and AV-8Bs. A follow on mission to the primary one being executed is a non-combatant evacuation which is assigned to the MEU. Once the primary mission is completed, the SOMEb and SMU redeploy back to CONUS. The Civil Affairs detachments arrive and link up with the ESG/MEU to assist with humanitarian and peace keeping operations.

Money--Show me the money. This issue has always surfaced when discussing Marine Corps involvement in special operations. SOF personnel against Marine Corps' involvement in special operations bring up the issue of money. Some are suspicious of the motives behind Marines joining SOF and that they are doing it just to reap the benefits of the funding benefits SOCOM has. To explain, USSOCOM has its budget laid out in Major Force Program-11 which allows it to function similar to a service. "It allows it to develop and pay for new equipment as well as fund the operations and maintenance of forces attached. Virtually all of the associated manpower costs, some of the military construction costs, and all of the equipment costs are paid for by MFP-11."⁸³ Col Hand in his letter published in the July 2001 Marine Corps Gazette brought up some very relevant issues concerning SOCOM money and the strings attached to it.

To clarify an additional point, the manpower costs he refers to would not include the initial manpower training and assessment costs; these costs would still be picked up by the parent service. Although MPF-11 monies would pay for a good portion of costs associated with the standup of a MARSOC, there would still be a good bit of start up costs for the Marine Corps. One important point to consider in the MARSOC endeavors, there is no free lunch. Bottom line is, whatever Marine Corps unit that is offered to SOCOM, under the agreement of benefiting from MFP-11 funding, would now belong to SOCOM.

Augmentation of SOC staffs— Currently there are only a handful of Marines assigned to staff billets in special operations. The majority of these billets reside at USSOCOM, which has a total of 33 Marine Corps billets, plus the addition of a Marine Corps General Officer as the Chief of Staff. Of the 33 billets at SOCOM, 12 of the billets are officer billets. At the Theater SOCs, the Marine Corps representation is even less. At SOCPAC there are a total of four Marine officers assigned consisting mainly of infantry, intelligence and logistics specialties. SOCLANT has two officer billets and SOCEUR has two. The TSOCs' senior Marine representation is a LtCol. The Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) has four officers consisting of infantry, artillery and intelligence experience. The senior Marine at JSOC is a LtCol. NAVSPECWARDEVGRP has one air officer who is a Captain and is the senior officer. The John F. Kennedy Warfighting Center at Fort Bragg has two Marine Corps officers assigned.⁸⁴

To assist the Combatant Commanders in the employment of the SOMEb and MEUs, additional Marine officers and Staff NCO's would need to be put on the USSOCOM and TSOC staffs. The augmentation would include both staff officers and LNOs, with all personnel having some type of SOF or MEU experience.

MEU/SOF experienced officers would also be assigned to the Joint Special Operations School to instruct the students on the capabilities provided by the MEUs and the SOMEb.

Another augmentation to this would be 'virtual LNO's' at the TSOCs, MEUs, SOMEb, MARSOC, and SOCOM. The virtual LNO concept would tie together these staffs through virtual planning and liaison computer networks.

Exchange billets—It will be extremely important to continue the pilot exchange program in place with AFSOC and TF-160. This should be expanded to include a Marine pilot at the Air Force's newly developed aviation tactics school and a CH-53E pilot with TF-160. Additionally, an MH-53M PaveLow pilot should be assigned to MAWTS-1. The exchange program should be expanded to include the Air Force flight engineers, all service enlisted crew chiefs and aerial

gunners. A SNCO exchange program should also be implemented between Force Recon and the SMUs.

RISKS—The traditionalists within the Marine Corps do not believe in an “elite within an elite” organization. The risk being those Marines who go down the SOF track will be labeled and will undoubtedly not fair well during promotion boards.

But considering that the Marine Corps sends its very best there, then fails to promote because they weren't serving with the “real Marine Corps,” you'll appreciate my concerns...I truly hope the Marine Corps can become a useful member of the SOF team. I have no doubt the Marines have men who can perform at that level. My concern is that the other 99% of the Marine Corps will not appreciate or support this effort.⁸⁵

If the efforts and Marine SOF programs are not managed properly, there could be other several unintended consequences associated with the sourcing of personnel, money, parts and equipment. There could also be the risk of creating a force of ‘have (Marine SOF) and have nots (the other Marine forces)’. These issues could be overcome eventually with time and commitment, just like they were within the Army, Air Force and Navy.

Transformational structural changes—There is a potential change the Marines could make that would be complimentary to any support provided to SOCOM. The change would expand on the Marine ‘niche’ making the Marine Corps a more efficient, tailored, viable warfighting force for the future. This change would also help absorb the costs associated with direct and indirect contributions to SOCOM. This change would be a restructure of organizing the Marine Corps into standing MAGTFs: MEUs→MEBs→MEFs.

History also tells us that whenever we have stayed at the forefront of change, we have prospered...Marines must sustain that ability to innovate. This is one of the biggest challenges of our institution...Creativity and innovation are absolutely essential if we are to anticipate events and win across the spectrum of conflict. We must be ruthless in stamping out those things that restrict creative thinking or limit the development of new approaches to the challenges we face.

—General Charles C. Krulak
Former Commandant of the Marine Corps

Explanation of this restructure would entail a paper in itself so discussion will be limited to the concept and how it would assist the SOCOM effort and tailor the Marine Corps to fight

future conflicts. This concept is nothing new, but was again fought off by traditionalist thinking who were still comfortable with a Cold War traditional fighting force.

...since the fall of the Soviet Union, our biggest challenge was to re-size the Cold War force into a smaller version of itself. Most of our Cold War doctrine, principles of operations, force design, and programming and acquisition processes remain unchanged. We have infused our smaller legacy force with the emerging advantages of the revolution of military affairs (RMA) and in many ways have improved the efficiency of elements of the force but have not, in light of the changing environment, necessarily maximized the overall effectiveness of the force.⁸⁶

General Krulak, when he was the Commandant, even indicated the need for change to meet the emerging threat. "I think seven [MEU (SOC)s] are enough to do the job today [1996], though beyond 2005 to 2010 it will not be. We have to get "outside of the box" in our thinking....I don't know what the implications are today, but I do know that I had better find the answer if the Marine Corps is going to remain relevant in the 21st century."⁸⁷ General Krulak had even envisioned the possibility of up to 36 type mini-MEU units.⁸⁸

The Marine Corps, although it normally deploys and employs as a MAGTF, is not permanently structured as a MAGTF and does not train like one. This often creates an environment of inefficiency, scarcity of resources, and lack of cohesion. Structuring as standing MAGTFs would streamline training and would also eliminate the normal chaos associated with no notice deployments requiring a MEU sized or MEB sized SPMAGTF. The plug and play unit would already be formed up and would have been training together in all type of environments (such as normal desert training at 29 Palms, California during Combined Arms Exercises), unlike the pickup team forces we deploy as today. The standing MAGTF concept would also make the MEUs a much better and credible force in the eyes of SOF because of the personnel and training continuity that would be gained.

Eliminating the current hierarchical structure of Regiments, Marine Air Groups, Divisions and Wings; and restructuring into MEFs—MEBs—MEUs would streamline the inefficient training and deployment system that exists today. It would increase unit personnel continuity across the board and decrease shortages through the force efficiency gained. The same headquarters functions that are executed by the eliminated extra staffs would be picked up by the reinforced headquarters staffs at the MEU, MEB, and MEF. The force efficiency of this restructure would also help with paying the manpower and equipment costs associated with the SOMEb. A standing MAGTF force structure would also be more in line with the expeditionary maneuver warfare concept and would be better suited to fighting the asymmetrical threats of the future.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER –CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has shown that USSOCOM needs assistance in the execution of its chartered missions. This paper asked two questions initially to determine if the Marine Corps should provide a contribution to SOF. Is it good for the country? The answer is yes. The country has stated the need for increased efforts in this area. To not do so, will make the Marine Corps less relevant and will give the indication that the Corps desires to be joint only when it serves the Marine Corps' purposes. Does it support the battlefield commander? The answer is yes as well. Earlier this paper indicated the current shortages that exist in SOF to execute their required missions. Those shortages were in the areas of ARMY SF, Air Force Special Tactics personnel/TACPs, Civil Affairs, heavy lift helicopters, KC-130 tanker aircraft and a forward deployed force not necessarily relying on host nation support. The recommended COA offering the SOMEb to SOCOM helps fill all of these shortages with existing capabilities.

The historical background has provided the basis for the current Marine Corps and USSOCOM relationship and some of the parochial barriers that are associated with the introduction of a Marine unit to SOCOM. This historical background has clearly shown the Marine Corps has a unique contribution to offer special operations.

Several options are available in Marine Corps contributions to SOCOM; some are better than others. The options were limited to four courses of action and were tested against the criteria set forth in the previous discussion.

The MARSOC DET of Force Recon was a good quick option to show Marine Corps commitment to strengthen the ties between the two organizations, but it does not provide a unique capability for SOCOM which does not already exist. Force Recon and the SEALs would both benefit from the concept, but the concept does not adequately address the issues where shortages currently exist.

Although the MEU (SOC) clearly provides the best capability because of its inherent forward deployed capability, to totally surrender all of the MEUs to SOCOM would degrade the Marine Corps' overall expeditionary capability too significantly. Additionally, the only way the MEUs could become a true SOF player would be through a standing MEU or a unique command and control relationship established between SOCOM and the Corps in the training and employment of the MEUs. A possible contribution of two or three standing MEUs to SOCOM could be an option, but again they would have to be standing MEUs, not a one year type organization as exists today. This concept would also be supportable only through reorganization of the Marine Corps into standing MAGTFs: MEUs, MEBs, MEFs.

The next best contribution and the recommendation of this paper is the offering up of the SOMEBC concept to USSOCOM as the Marine Corps contribution to special operations. This would adequately fulfill the requirements SOF requires today. The only capability the SOMEBC does not provide is the continuous forward deployed presence that the MEU provides.

The loss of this capability would be gained through increased interaction between the MEUs, SOCOM, JSOC and the TSOCs to make a supporting/supported relationship more efficient when required.

It has been addressed by the senior leadership of both the Marine Corps and USSOCOM that this effort is taking a slow cautious approach. This is good, however, too cautious or slow loses momentum and direction. If the Marine Corps decides (and it should) to support SOCOM, the Marine Corps will have to be consistent and proactive in its support of the concept. Fluctuation in commitment and support would only hurt the program and the people associated with it. The Marine Corps has proven in the past and present that it is fully capable of conducting special operations type missions, it just needs to be more formally committed to the process.

The Marine Corps stands to gain more from its USSOCOM association than the cost of its contribution. Marines trained to the special forces standard will impart those standards to conventional units with whom they will serve. Equipment, tactics and techniques developed for the special forces element likely will prove beneficial to other Marine Corps units. But these are long-term investments, and many will be impatient with the investment.⁸⁹

The Marine Corps must be flexible in its thinking. In order to assist USSOCOM in carrying out the increasing number and complexity of special operations type missions, the Marine Corps must dedicate a unit that is able to focus and specialize in this area. The changing environment has dictated this requirement. The country has asked for this capability. USSOCOM has shown its receptiveness to allow this to happen. There is no riding the fence in the special operations community and there is no free ride (commitments associated with receiving MFP-11 funding).

The Marine Corps has no choice than to venture outside its 'general-purpose force' protective shell and provide a 'show of faith' commitment to SOCOM; provide a capability that is a unique niche and is not a duplication of effort. In the long run, it may prove that having an 'elite force within an elite force' is not necessarily as bad as some people in the Marine Corps thought it would be and would most likely benefit the Marine Corps, USSOCOM, and our country in the fight against today's threat.

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